

JANUARY 28, 1982

The last cold spell set a winter tone to the Shortgrass Country. Old cows that were carrying some age were really humped up from the six days of frozen snow and sub-teen temperatures. The rush of the feed wagons and the frenzy of the ice choppers gained little headway against the sudden change from a warm winter to a near blizzard.

Southwest of us, one outfit had 15 inches of snowfall. Compared to the scant 4's in our area, the thought of so much moisture was hard to take. Our winters from the moisture angle are mainly composed of sleet and icicles, anyway. Most of our wintering is against broken plumbing and billowing dust. In the rare years, that we do get a wet snow, the best ringmaster in the biggest circus on earth can't match the enthusiasm of the herders. Snow is a mighty potent medicine in our land. It's the in betweens that hurt.

The best explanation I can offer for the variations in our weather, like this past snow, is the new satellite receivers that are popping up across the area. The salesmen out hustling them claim these big dish-shaped antennas have a range of over 20,000 miles. On any afternoon, a viewer fortunate enough to have the five thousand to buy one can choose from a slate of 60 game shows or soap operas to help him take his afternoon nap.

Anything that powerful is bound to be potent enough to draw in alien weather. You are not going to convince me that clouds that dropped 15 inches of snowfall weren't a skip from the Himalayas or Upper Tibet. I know how hard it is to get moisture to the Shortgrass Country depending on the old methods. Our northern boundary and eastern line have turned away more weather fronts than all the most formable natural barriers of the world combined.

After my neighbor Goat Whiskers the Younger installed a satellite system at his headquarters, we had morning fogs and dews that I know weren't native in nature. Dewdrops on the windshields were pure water and under magnification didn't have speck of dust or cedar pollen.

The norm for a Shortgrass dewdrop doesn't run 10 percent moisture. During wet spells we have a much bigger chance of an old pony catching dust pneumonia than coming down with dew poisoning. I suspect that Whiskers was dozing off with his set tuned to Puerto Rico or Tampa Bay. Before the station would sign off for the night, their morning weather would be in from the ocean and be drawn right into our atmosphere.

I do agree that it's hard to deliberately affect the weather however, to do so accidentally may not be as difficult as we suppose it is. People thought for a long time that putting in dams and lakes was changing the rainfall.

At places like Del Rio where the Rio Grande was dammed by a big international project, folks had high hopes that the huge lake was going to change the climate on both sides of the border.

Fogs did start floating up canyons that had rocks in them that had never been wet on both sides before the dam was built. Then one day during hunting season an old boy selling licenses from an ice house began to notice how damp and steamy the pickups and camper windows were that were coming from the big coastal cities like Corpus and Houston. He was in an excellent position to make a study. Each hunter was giving his body weight. All he had to do was develop a formulation and add so much for the liquid

refreshments these red caps were buying from his store, like beer and whiskey. In one season he was able to disprove the lake theory and show beyond doubt that the hombres from the humid areas were bringing in the moisture in their heavy clothes.

The snow didn't leave us much. However, the thaw hasn't been as serious as expected. We have a few broken pipes and a sprinkling of old cows that'll have to be brought in closer for special care.

I am going to monitor Whiskers' taste in long range television. Who knows, we may have a spring that was intended for the Rocky Mountains.